Effective Special Education Programming and Services

Response to the Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee

Student Services

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

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Effective Special Education Programming and Services

Response to the *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee*

2003

Nova Scotia

Message from the Minister

One of the greatest challenges we face in the public education system is effectively responding to the diverse learning and behavioral needs of students in our public school system.

The magnitude of this challenge is well documented in the *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee (SEIRC Report)*, which outlines numerous recommendations to more effectively meet the needs of students with special needs.

The SEIRC Report also highlights the fact that the responsibility for meeting this challenge rests with everyone involved in the public education system: teachers, students, parents, administrators, faculties of education, school boards, unions, and government.

As outlined in the report that follows, and as earlier articulated in *Learning for Life*, government is committed to improving the learning environment for all students. To that end, we are investing more than $35 million over the next three years to reduce class sizes in the early grades, hire more core professionals, purchase new assistive technologies, pilot new programming approaches and provide more professional development opportunities for those who work in the public school system.

While many of the recommendations contained in the *SEIRC Report* are already underway, government recognizes there is still more to do. The response that follows indicates government's commitment to work with its partners to further improve the learning environment for students with special needs.

Sincerely,

Angus MacIsaac

Honourable Angus MacIsaac

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Introduction

Education Minister Jane Purves announced Nova Scotia's Special Education Implementation Review Committee (SEIRC) in May 2000. SEIRC, which included representatives of parents, teachers, school boards, universities, government, and organizations representing children and youth with disabilities, was asked to review challenges related to the implementation of Nova Scotia's special education policy and to make recommendations for improvement.

In carrying out its review, SEIRC examined background information on legislation, various special education policy documents, and relevant reports from other provinces. The committee heard presentations on specific topics such as special education funding, interagency collaboration, accountability issues, and intensive behaviour intervention programming and strategies.

SEIRC also sought input from the general public and stakeholders through a survey questionnaire. Respondents were asked to consider eight special education policy-related areas. The questionnaire generated 1,300 responses. As well, in order to explore more fully the issues, parents, students, teachers, teacher assistants, school and student services administrators, school board members, and other professionals who serve students with special needs took part in 47 focus-group discussions.

In June 2001 the *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee (SEIRC Report)* was released. While SEIRC noted that many improvements had been made since Nova Scotia's Special Education Policy Manual was introduced in 1996, it made 34 recommendations to further improve programming and services for students with special needs.

In September of this year, Minister Purves released *Learning for Life*, a three-year plan that commits an additional $17.4 million in new targeted funding to continue to improve learning outcomes for students with special needs.

What follows is a more detailed response to each of the recommendations contained in the *SEIRC Report*, identifying the actions government will take to enhance special education programming and services.

Statement of Principles

The following principles are taken from the Nova Scotia Department of Education's *Special Education Policy Manual* and served as a framework for SEIRC and the Department of Education when preparing this response.

Right to an Appropriate Education

A right to an appropriate education means the fundamental educational human right of every individual to have their unique learning needs responded to on an individual basis.

Right to Quality Education and Qualified Teachers

All students have a right to be taught by licensed, qualified teachers who are responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the program match, as much as possible, student strength and needs.

Inclusive Schooling

An inclusive school is a school where every child is respected as part of the school community, and where each child is encouraged to learn and achieve as much as possible ... a place where all children could learn and where differences are cherished for the richness they bring.

Teachers' Responsibility

Teachers are responsible for all students who are placed under their supervision and care. This includes responsibility for safety and well-being as well as program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Parental Involvement

Parents have an obligation and a responsibility to be an integral part of their child's education and should be involved in program planning from the start.

Individual Program Plan Accountability

For some students individual program plans are necessary. The development and implementation of Individual Program Plans (IPPs) strengthen student/teacher accountability. Students work toward goals outlined in the IPP and this forms the foundation for the evaluation of student outcomes.

Collaboration

Collaboration and consultation are essential in supporting students with special needs to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to program planning and service delivery.

Response to Recommendations in the *SEIRC Report* and Action to Date

Recommendation 1

The Department of Education and school boards should develop a communication plan to improve understanding of inclusive schooling and programming and services for students with special needs. The communication plan will describe how to access existing documents and will support the development of a series of information brochures. The brochures should describe programming and services available and how they can be accessed. Brochures should cover, but not be limited to, the foliowing:

- inclusive schooling
- identification and assessment
- program planning process
- appeal process
- transitions

Stakeholder groups should be consulted regarding the development of the plan and materials, and the documents should emphasize clear explanations using plain language.

Response

The Department of Education recognizes the need to improve communication with parents and the broader school community on inclusive schooling. It also recognizes that there is a need to provide more information to parents on the range of special education programming and services available to students. A communications plan that responds, but is not limited to, the five areas noted by SEIRC, will be developed in consultation with school boards. Work has already begun with the departments of education in Atlantic Canada on an inclusive schooling brochure. As recommended, the communications plan will include a series of plain-language brochures, the first of which to be introduced this school year. The department will also ensure the Special Education Programs and Services Committee (SEPS), which includes advocacy representation, has input into the development of the brochures.

Brochure Topics and Accompanying Time Lines

- Inclusive Schooling (2002–03)
- The Program Planning Process (2002–03)
- The Appeal Process (2003–04)
- Identification and Assessment (2003–04)
- Transition Planning (2003–04)

Recommendation 2

The Department of Education and school boards should establish common terminology in special education (e.g., adaptations/modifications, EPA/SPA/TA, resource teachers/PST/LST, etc.). Further, the Department of Education should clarify the term "emotional impairment" in Policy 1.3.

Response

Plain and consistent language will be supported to the greatest degree possible. This will require a commitment on the part of all the partners involved in providing programs and services to students with special needs. As well, the department will clarify the term emotional impairment specifically as it pertains to Policy 1.3 to assist in ensuring consistent understanding and interpretation.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Education, university faculties of education, school boards, and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) should collaborate on the development and implementation of an ongoing inservice plan for teachers, administrators, professional support staff, and teacher assistants on programming and services for students with special needs. The plan should encourage

- involvement of teachers and teacher assistants in the design and development of inservice plans to address local needs
- participation of school board members, parents, university education faculty, and professionals from outside education who work with children and youth with special needs.

The plan should increase knowledge and understanding of specific disabilities and the link between assessment and instructional practices and should focus on a variety of teaching strategies, adaptations, learning styles, individual program planning, meaningful parental involvement, teacher-student communication, behavioural issues, and leadership.

The Department of Education and school boards should provide sufficient additional funding and time for implementation of the plan and ensure systematic evaluation of outcomes.

Response

The Department of Education has been working closely with school boards to expand the implementation of the special education policy, including identifying priority areas for professional development as it relates to programming for students with special needs.

The department currently monitors professional development efforts at the board level and provides financial assistance to help boards implement their individual professional development plans. As is currently the practice, the department will continue to share information on board professional development with SEPS.

Additionally, the department will work with school boards to

- implement *Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services*—a teachers' and administrators' guide on resource teaching
- develop teacher resources and expand in-service opportunities in the area of assistive technology
- review and update the *Authorized Learning Resources* (ALR)
- implement *Challenge for Excellence: Enrichment and Gifted Education Resource Guide*
- enhance programming for students with special needs at the senior high level
- enhance transition planning and programming (into school, from year to year, and school to community)
- support new training efforts for teacher assistants related to applying assistive technology and providing behavioural support for students

The Student Services Division of the Department of Education will also continue to provide summer institute opportunities related to improving programming and services for students with special needs. (See also recommendation 32.)

In order to address priority needs, the department also sponsors summer institutes to support teachers working with children with special needs. In 2002, 48 teachers from across the province participated in the institute, Developing Capability: Programming for Students with Extensive Needs. The department will continue to support teachers through summer institutes this year and in future years.

In 2002, the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (Department of Education, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Nova Scotia School Boards Association) offered Nova Scotia's first module for present and future administrators on ways to support inclusive schooling. This module, entitled Leadership for Inclusive Schooling, had 27 participants. The module will be offered again this summer to expand the number of school administrators equipped with the knowledge to support inclusive schooling this summer.

As well, a summer institute(s) for board office/school administrators/student services personnel in mediation skills training will be developed and implemented this summer. This institute will provide participants with personal conflict mediation knowledge and skills to help effectively resolve disputes and work effectively with parents, particularly when working as part of a team to develop indivualized programming for students with special needs.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Education and school boards should develop and implement information and training sessions for parents regarding the special education policy, programming and services for students with special needs, and issues surrounding specific disabilities.

Response

While some school boards have developed parents guides on services for students with special needs, the department will work with boards to ensure parents across the province have access to this information. A new parents guide on program planning will be developed for the next school year. (See also recommendations 11 and 12.)

Recommendation 5

The Department of Education, school boards, NSTU, and faculties of education should design and implement an annual institute to provide opportunities for education professionals to share and network effective/promising practices, materials, and resources. Involved in these sessions should be parents, advocacy groups, and other professionals to share their experiences.

Response

Currently, summer institutes are co-ordinated with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and the Department of Education, in conjunction with school boards. University faculties of education also offer summer institutes through this venue. The Department of Education understands the important contribution that parents offer in identifying professional development needs and will explore, with its partners, opportunities for greater parental involvement.

Recommendation 6

The Department of Education and school boards should review existing referral and assessment practices of school boards and develop uniform guidelines that

- establish appropriate and timely referral and assessment practices
- describe the ongoing link between assessment and instructional practices

Response

The recently released document *Learning for Life* identifies an additional $6 million in targeted funding for core professional services that will assist in ensuring timely referral and intervention practices. Over the next three years, at least 60 professionals, including resource teachers, speech language pathologists, and others, will be hired.

As well, through the provincial meetings of student services co-ordinators/supervisors, the department will work to ensure board-level referral and assessment practices are reviewed. The Department of Education will also support the boards in developing and implementing guidelines that address appropriate and timely referral and assessment practices. A brochure on *Identification and Assessment* as referenced in Recommendation 1 will be developed. The ongoing link between assessment and instructional practices will also be a focus of professional development as outlined in Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 7

The Department of Education, university faculties of education, and school boards in consultation with teachers should collaborate to design, implement, and evaluate professional development opportunities for resource and classroom teachers, including institutes and courses on identification and assessment practices.

Response

An innovative, Master's degree program that began in 2001–02 is making training more accessible for resource and classroom teachers. The Department of Education, along with school boards and university faculties of education, developed this program, which is helping to address the challenges of teaching in the public school system. Approximately 110 teachers from Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, Strait Regional School Board, Halifax Regional School Board, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial and Eskasoni have participated in the program to date. An additional 41 teachers are currently enrolled for 2002–03. Current partners include the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, the Strait Regional School Board, the Halifax Regional School Board, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, St. Francis Xavier University, Mount Saint Vincent University, and the Department of Education.

Recommendation 8

The Department of Education should set targets and provide financial support for appropriate numbers of qualified professionals in the school system to support the identification and assessment process. Geographic considerations should be incorporated into this process.

Response

The Department of Education recognizes the need to increase the number of qualified professionals hired to support students with special needs in Nova Scotia. *Learning for Life* outlines government's commitment to invest a total of $17.4 million to support special education over the next three years. This money will be targeted specifically to meet professional, assistive technology, and other needs, and will enable the hiring of at least 135 reading recovery teachers, resource teachers, speech language pathologists, and other professionals. Professional staff hired for these new positions will be expected to have appropriate qualifications and meet competency criteria. (See also recommendations 19 and 25.)

Recommendation 9

The Department of Education should establish a committee including NSTU and school boards to review and recommend by November 1, 2001, ways to ensure teachers have sufficient time available for program planning. The report of the committee should provide

- options/effective practices to increase the time available to plan
- clarification that 'contact time' includes time utilized for program planning
- a communication/implementation plan

Response

As part of the new Teachers Provincial Agreement, a fund of $500,000 will be established to provide a bank of days to enhance time available for collaborative individualized program planning and IPP meetings.

Recommendation 10

The Department of Education and school boards should develop and implement a guide for teachers, administrators, and professional support personnel, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the program planning process.

Response

A new guide on resource programs and services entitled *Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services* has been developed and will be implemented in spring 2003. Professional development for in-service teams comprising teachers, administrators, and other professionals is planned for spring 2003. (See also recommendations 25 and 27.) Additionally, plans are underway to update guidelines for speech language pathology and to develop a new guide on the delivery of school psychology services.

Recommendation 11

The Department of Education, in consultation with the Special Education Programs and Services Committee (SEPS), should develop a guide for parents on the program planning process and the role of all partners in the process.

Response

The Department of Education will develop a new plain-language guide to improve parents' understanding of the program planning process. This new guide will be developed in consultation with SEPS and will identify clearly the role of all partners in establishing IPPs designed to support student success.

Recommendation 12

Each school board should develop and implement a strategy consistent with the guide to enhance meaningful parental involvement in the program planning process.

Response

In addition to developing a new guide to improve parent understanding of the program planning process, the Department of Education will work with its school board partners to develop and implement strategies to enhance parental involvement in the program planning process.

Recommendation 13

Government, through the Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC), should ensure interagency collaboration to enhance access to programs and services for children and youth with special needs. The following actions should be undertaken:

- Revise and expand the handbook *Transition Planning in Nova Scotia* (1994). Transition procedures at school entry and school leaving should be outlined.
- Develop collaborative practices with health professionals to ensure that recommendations made to schools are feasible, and practical and consider the context of the school environment.
- Identify and address the gaps in support for children and youth with special needs. This should include implementation of the recommendations in the report "Mental Health: A Time for Action," Bland and Dufton, May 2000.
- Develop a mechanism for the provision of services and funding to support youth with disabilities aged 18–21 years old upon school leaving.

Response

- The Department of Education continues to work closely with its CAYAC partners to make programs and services for children and youth with special needs more accessible. For example, the department was involved in developing CAYAC's children and youth mental health strategy.
- As a key partner in Early Identification and Intervention Services (EIIS), the Department of Education is helping to build early identification and intervention services across the province for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- In order to assist parents help their children make a smooth transition into school, while in school, and before leaving school, the department will work with its CAYAC partners in updating and expanding the *Handbook on Transition Planning in Nova Scotia* (2002–03). In addition, CAYAC will establish a provincial committee to address transition issues for children and youth with special needs.

Recommendation 14

The Department of Education should define core services and desired service ratios (based on recognized professional standards) for professional staff at the school board and school levels.

Response

As outlined in Learning for Life, government has committed $6 million in targeted funding over the next three years to hire at least 60 core service professionals, including resource teachers and speech pathologists. This funding will help ensure students with special needs have greater access to the professional services and supports they need.

Recommendation 15

The Department of Education should engage a person on a short-term contract a person with expertise and qualifications in the educational applications of assistive technology to design a framework for the acquisition, distribution, and provision of a full range of assistive technology devices and services for the P–12 school system.

Response

The Department of Education is currently reviewing decision-making procedures regarding the acquisition and use of assistive technology and will develop guidelines that will be available to all school boards. This will help ensure that teachers and program planning team members access and use appropriate assistive technologies. As well, it will ensure students with special needs receive maximum value from the new assistive technologies that will be purchased as a result of the $1.1 million assistive technology fund recently announced in *Learning for Life*.

Recommendation 16

The Department of Education and school boards should review and update the list of Authorized Learning Resources to facilitate access to appropriate multi-level resources for students and teachers in both English and French.

Response

In order to respond more effectively to the diverse learning needs of students, the department will establish a working group to review and update the *ALR*. As well, working groups developing new curriculum will have student services representation to ensure resources are appropriate for the wide range of diverse needs in our classrooms.

Recommendation 17

The Department of Education, in consultation with education partners, should develop programming guidelines and strategies to support students with behavioural challenges in the school system.

Response

- The department, in partnership with the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF), is developing a document that will assist school-based staff to identify strategies to promote safe schools as well as to more effectively address behavioural challenges.
- The department is also reviewing the recent recommendations of the Provincial Student Education Council, which identified a number of measures to address bullying.
- In addition, code of conduct guidelines are being completed, a non-violent crisis intervention training network has been established, and leaders in co-operative discipline have been trained in each school board. As well, more schools will be offered comprehensive guidance and counselling training beginning in spring 2003.

Recommendation 18

The Department of Education, through the Education Funding Committee, should address the issue of class size guidelines and related funding requirements.

Response

As outlined in *Learning for Life*, $18 million is being invested over the next three years to hire 175 new teachers and to reduce class size in the early years of schooling.

Recommendation 19

The Department of Education should provide an immediate injection of $20 million in the 2002–2003 fiscal year targeted to a base level of core services and appropriate service ratios.

Response

The government announced recently that it will invest more than $35 million over the next three years to reduce class sizes, hire more core service professionals, purchase more assistive technologies, pilot new programming approaches to support students with special needs, and expand professional development opportunities for those working in the public education system.

Recommendation 20

Core services caseloads should be reviewed annually by the Special Education Programs and Services Committee to recommend appropriate service and funding levels to the Minister.

Response

In keeping with government's commitment to ensure dollars are targeted to areas of greatest need, the annual submission of student services data by boards will be monitored closely. These reviews will be used to determine how any future funding enhancements will be distributed. The department will ensure SEPS has an opportunity to review the results of these annual reviews.

Recommendation 21

The Department of Education should cost the recommendations in the SEIRC report and include them in the funding plan in time for the next budget cycle. The plan will identify how the additional funding should be targeted to address needs in the following priority areas:

- professional development
- support for emotional/behaviourally challenged students based on:
  I. guidelines developed by the department in consultation with school boards, teachers, and parents and
  II. proposals submitted by school boards reflecting effective practices
- learning resources for students with special needs including a designated amount to be accessed at the school level
- assistive technology
- teacher time for program planning and implementation

Response

As outlined in *Learning for Life*, more than $35 million will be invested to reduce class sizes, hire more core service professionals, purchase more assistive technologies, pilot new programming approaches to support students with special needs, and expand professional development opportunities for those working in the public education system. An additional, $500,000 will be invested to enhance time available for collaborative individualized program planning and IPP meetings (See response to recommendation 9.)

Recommendation 22

Additional funding should be included in the resource credit allocation for schools to reflect the need for additional learning resources for students with special needs.

Response

In 2002–03, the department committed $100,000 in targeted funding to assist boards provide additional learning resources for students with special needs.

Recommendation 23

School boards should monitor Individual Program Plans (IPPs) to ensure that the outcomes developed and implemented are appropriate and measurable. In addition, a consistent system should be developed to track, monitor, and report to parents student progress and achievement on outcomes stated in IPPs.

Response

The department will work with school boards to identify appropriate monitoring and review mechanisms regarding IPPs. A standard reporting format for IPPs has been developed and is now being piloted. Progress reports for students with IPPs will be based on the outcomes as outlined in their IPPs.

Recommendation 24

As recommended in Post-Shapiro *Review of Teacher Education in Nova Scotia*, October 2000, the Minister should ensure there is a mechanism to monitor pre-service teacher education programs and propose policy changes. All teachers who successfully complete an approved program of initial teacher education and are certified to teach in Nova Scotia should have undertaken coursework that addresses programming in special education and practica within inclusive settings that involves working with a diverse range of students who have special education needs.

Response

The departments of education in the four Atlantic Provinces (APEF) have identified gaps in teacher pre-service training required in relation to meeting the needs of diverse learners. APEF will arrange to meet with the Atlantic provinces' teacher training institutions to identify how to respond to this as well as to other pre-service matters. In addition, the Nova Scotia Department of Education will consult with the NSTU and with Nova Scotia universities offering BEds on this issue.

Recommendation 25

Notwithstanding contractual agreements, the Department of Education should define or adopt, and school boards should adhere to, competencies and/or professional qualifications in hiring or assigning persons responsible for providing core special education services (e.g., resource teachers, speech language pathologists, school psychologists, student service co-ordinators).

Response

- Competencies for resource teachers have been recently updated and are outlined in *Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services*. (2002–03)
- The department will work with school boards to ensure that they have knowledge of competencies for student services co-ordinators, school psychologists, and speech language pathologists.

Recommendation 26

School boards should ensure that each school implements "Tracking Our Progress" as part of their school improvement planning. School boards should submit an annual report on implementation to the Department of Education, which in turn will be shared with SEPS.

Response

- Tracking our Progress, one of the monitoring tools for implementation of the special education policy, will be connected to board reporting on additional funding and accountability. The annual submission of student services data by boards will be monitored and any future funding enhancements tied to these reviews. (See also response 20.)
- The department will require boards to report progress on programming and services for students with special needs in their annual business plans. (2002–03)

Recommendation 27

School boards should monitor resource teacher allocations in schools to ensure appropriate utilization of allocated staff and effective implementation of resource programs and services.

Response

The annual submission of student services data by boards will be reviewed. Any future funding enhancements will be distributed with a view to meeting priority needs.

Recommendation 28

The Department of Education, in consultation with school boards, should identify core competencies for teacher assistants to be included in training programs for teacher assistants. These competencies should be required components in approved training programs.

Response

The department has developed guidelines for teacher assistants that outline pre-service core competencies. The department will continue to work with boards to ensure existing and new teacher assistants possess appropriate core competencies. (2002–03)

Recommendation 29

School boards should develop short- and long-term plans for the provision of barrier-free access to, and within, educational facilities as mandated under Section 64(2)(e) of the *Education Act* and include updates on implementation of their plans as part of their annual report to the Minister of Education. The Department of Education should provide an annual update to be tabled each fall at a SEPS meeting regarding progress in both existing and new facilities in improving barrier-free access to public schools.

Response

The department will provide SEPS with an annual outline of each board's progress in providing barrier-free access in existing and new schools. (2003–04)

Recommendation 30

The department should table an annual report with SEPS on progress in implementing the special education policy and the recommendations in this report and on the resources provided to school boards and schools to assist in implementation.

Response

- The department will require boards to report progress relating to programming and services for students with special needs in their annual business plans. Board reports will be shared with SEPS. (2002–03)
- The annual submission of student services data by boards will be reviewed to monitor service ratios with special education co-ordinators for consideration of future enhancement to service and funding levels.

Recommendation 31

The Department of Education, in consultation with the current SEPS committee, should review the role, mandate, and membership of the SEPS in light of the additional responsibilities recommended by this report.

Response

A review of the role, mandate, and membership of SEPS will be carried out. SEPS will be consulted during the review. (2002–03)

Recommendation 32

The Department of Education, in collaboration with school boards, should provide professional development for board office and school administrators and student services personnel in mediation skills to increase their ability to ensure that disputes regarding IPPs are resolved in a manner that is timely and minimizes the necessity of using the formal appeal process.

Response

The Student Services Division of the Department of Education will continue to provide summer institute opportunities for professional development.

- At the request of school boards, the division offered an institute entitled Developing Capability: Programming for Students with Extensive Needs. Forty-eight teachers from across the province registered and participated in the institute. (2002)
- A module for administrators and future administrators has been developed entitled Leadership for Inclusive Schooling. Twenty-seven participants participated in the first summer session. (2002)
- A summer institute(s) for board office/school administrators/student services personnel in mediation skills training is being developed for implementation in 2003.

Recommendation 33

The Department of Education, in collaboration with school boards, should adopt mandatory procedures for the school board level appeal process that ensure timely resolution, specific recommendations, and parent involvement in selection of the review panel (similar to those afforded in the provincial appeal process).

Response

School Board and Ministerial Appeal Guidelines will be updated to clarify roles and responsibilities. A template that identifies clearly components of both board and ministerial level appeals will be developed.

Recommendation 34

The Department of Education and school boards should develop an information package on the appeal process to be distributed to parents in situations where there is an unresolved dispute regarding IPP outcomes or placement. The package should include all relevant board and department information in a format which provides parents with clear directions throughout the appeal process.

Response

The Department of Education and school boards will develop an information package on the appeal process with a section on parents' rights regarding the appeal process. (2003–04)

Appendix A—*SEIRC Report*: Action to Date

Recommendation	Topic	Action to Date	Proposed Action
1	Communication Plan	• APEF Inclusive Schooling brochure drafted	Develop brochures as follows: Program Planning Process (2002–03), Appeal Process, Transition Planning (2003–04), Identification and Assessment (2003–04)
2	Common Terminology	• Discussions initiated with Student Services coordinators	ongoing
3	Professional Development	• School Boards submitted plans based on provincial priorities • Developed and implemented inclusive schooling module for administrators (summer 2002)	• summer institutes • ongoing professional development
4	Information/ Training for Parents	School boards have developed parent brochures and information pamphlets	guide on program planning (2003–04)
5	Annual Institutes	Summer institutes offered 2002	
6	Referral and AssessmentPractices		develop and implement guidelines (2004–05)
7	Professional Development Opportunities for Professional Staff	Established a Master's degree program in partnership with universities and school boards	• continue to offer this program to teachers • supporting practicums
8	Identification and Assessment—Appropriate Numbers of Qualified Professionals	A total of $6.0 M additional targeted funding announced from 2003–06 to increase number of core professional service providers	
9	Time for Program Planning	Department of Education and NSTU report completed, $500,000 in financial support	

Recommendation	Topic	Action to Date	Proposed Action
10	Guide regarding Roles and Responsibilities (for staff)	*Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services* completed November 2002	Develop guidelines for speech-language pathologists (2003–04), school psychology (2004–05)
11	Guide for Parents on Program Planning		Develop a new guide for parents on program planning (2003–04)
12	Enhanced Parent Involvement in Program Planning		Implementation of Guide at school board level in 2004–05
13	Interagency Collaboration	• Revision of *Transition Planning Handbook* in draft • Re-established Provincial Transition Committee under CAYAC • Draft Transfer of Specialized Health Care Functions protocol completed • EIIS brochure completed	• Implement Transition Plan • Implement transfer of specialized health care functions protocol
14	Core Services Desired Service Ratios	See *Learning for Life*, p.19	
15	Assistive Technology Resources	Assistive Technology guidelines in development	$.05 M in 2003–04 $.30 M in 2004–05 $.30 M in 2005–06
16	Authorized Learning Resources	• Committee to expand resource list established • Extensive resources allocated to schools for grades 4–6 and 7–9 struggling readers (2002–03)	
17	Guidelines and Strategies for Students with Behavioural Challenges	• APEF draft on behaviour strategies developed • Code of Conduct Guidelines in progress • Four behaviour intervention pilots underway • Cooperative Discipline training for leaders in each board (summer 2002) • Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling training in spring 2003	In-service guides

Recommendation	Topic	Action to Date	Proposed Action
18	Class Size Guidelines	see *Learning for Life*, p.7	
19	Core Services and Appropriate Service Ratios	see Targeted Core Professional Services, *Learning for Life*, p.19	
20	Core Services Caseloads	see Targeted Core Professional Services, *Learning for Life*, p.19	
21	Costing Recommendations	Draft completed. To be discussed with Special Education Programs & Services committee	
22	Increase Authorized Resource Credit Allocation	$100,000 identified in 2002–03 focussed on literacy	
23	Monitoring of individual program plans (IPPs)	Template developed for reporting on individual program plans for provincial report card, piloting in 2002–03	Implementation of report card (2003–04)
24	Monitoring Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs	Identified gaps in pre-service and APEF discussing this with universities	
25	Competencies and/or Professional Qualifications	Competencies for Resource Teachers developed	Develop guidelines for speech-language pathologists (2003–04), school psychology (2004–05)
26	Tracking Our Progress	Redeveloping Tracking Our Progress to ensure connection to additional funding and accountability (2002–03)	Incorporation of reporting on student services in annual business planning and school accreditation pilots (2003–04)
27	Monitoring Resource Teacher Allocation	Annual Student Services Provincial Survey used to monitor	
28	Core Competencies for Teacher Assistants	Draft of competencies developed	Develop and implement in-service modules based on identified needs
29	Barrier-Free Access	Standards currently in *Education Act*—Section 64 (2)(e)	Require as part of annual business plan (2003–04)

Recommendation	Topic	Action to Date	Proposed Action
30	Annual Reports on Special Education Policy Implementation		Annual report to be tabled with SEPS starting in 2003
31	Review of SEPS Mandate/ Membership	Draft mandate—membership document prepared and submitted to SEPS	
32	Professional Development in Mediation Skills for School Board Staff		Mediation Skills Workshop, Summer institute, 2003
33	Mandatory Appeal Procedures—school board level		*School Board and Ministerial Guidelines* will be updated
34	Information Package on Appeal Process		Boards to develop (2003–04)

Appendix B—Action Plan Time Line

2002–03

- Information Brochure—Inclusive Schooling
- Information Brochure—The Program Planning Process
- Update—*School Board and Ministerial Appeal Guidelines*
- Brochure describing Early Identification and Intervention Services (EIIS) for children with autistic spectrum disorder
- Revision and expansion of the *Handbook on Transition Planning in Nova Scotia*
- Working toward the establishment and use of common terminology relating to programming and services for students with special needs (ongoing)
- Draft Transfer of Specialized Health Care Functions Protocol
- Department of Education will continue to serve as an active member of the Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC) (ongoing)
- Provincial priorities determined in consultation with Student Services Coordinators of school boards (ongoing)
- Boards submit annual plans for furthering special education policy implementation (ongoing)
- Special Education Policy Implementation Grant allocated based on proposals (ongoing)
- Consortium of five school boards, Department of Education, and universities identify and offer courses and modules for practising resource teachers (ongoing)
- Summer institute—Developing Capability: Programming for Students with Extensive Needs
- Invite boards to apply for specially designated funding for pilot projects (*Learning for Life*, p.19)
- NSELC Module 9 developed and delivered—Leadership for Inclusive Schooling
- Tracking Our Progress to be redeveloped
- Guide on resource programming and services, *Supporting Students Success: Resource Programming and Services* developed and implemented
- APEF draft document *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments*
- *Code of Conduct Guidelines*
- Code of Conduct Pilots: $100,000 targeted for additional resources
- Identify framework for monitoring and reviewing IPPs
- Section for reporting on outcomes of IPPs in new provincial report card; implement pilots

2002–03 continued

- Competencies for resource teachers updated in *Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services*
- Department and boards will work to establish entry level of competencies and qualifications for professionals working with students with special needs
- Review the role, mandate, and membership of SEPS
- Work with boards to increase awareness of core competencies for teacher assistants
- Update of Tracking Our Progress to strengthen accountability
- Invite boards to apply for specially designated funding for pilot projects

2003–04

- Information Brochure—The Appeal Process
- Information Brochure—Identification and Assessment
- Information Brochure—Transition Planning
- School boards to develop information packages on appeal process with section on parent's rights regarding appeals
- Develop framework for writing appeal decisions
- Develop guide for parents on program planning
- $800,000 designated funding to reduce the gap between current professional service ratios and the minimum required ratio recommended
- $500,000 to support time available for program planning
- $667,000 designated to expand Reading Recovery
- Summer Institute on mediation skills training
- Guide on speech-language pathology services revised and updated
- Review of *Authorized Learning Resources* to identify resources for annotation
- Department will work with boards to ensure knowledge of competencies and qualifications for speech/language pathologists
- SEPS will be provided with an outline of boards progress re barrier free access
- Designate $1 million for pilot projects to provide a range and continuum of programming and services for students with special needs
- $50,000 designated to develop a framework for the acquisition, distribution and provision of a range of assistive technology devices and services
- Annual reporting on special education policy implementation to SEPS

2004–05
• Development and implementation of guidelines for referral and assessment • Development of guide on the provision of school psychology services • Monitor professional service ratios • $1.2 million designated funding to reduce the gap between current professional service ratios and the minimum required ratio recommended • $1 million designated to expand Reading Recovery™ • Department will work with boards to ensure knowledge of competencies and qualifications for school psychologists • Designate $1 million for pilot projects to provide a range and continuum of programming and services for students with special needs • $300,000 designated funding for implementation of the assistive technology framework
2005–06
• $1.2 million designated funding to reduce the gap between current professional service ratios and the minimum required ratio recommended • $333,000 designated to expand Reading Recovery™ • Designate $1 million for pilot projects to provide a range and continuum of programming and services for students with special needs • $300,000 designated funding for implementation of the assistive technology framework